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ART AMONG THE BALLAD-MONGERS.*

By LLEWELLYNN JEWITT, F.S.A.



AMONG other matters of intense moment and interest to the historical student which are well illustrated by the woodcuts attached to our old ballads, garlands, and chap books, are those which represent the various punishments that at one time or other, though now happily obsolete, were in vogue among us. The pillory, the stocks, and the hurdle, the brank, the thew, and the ducking-stool, are all, as well as burning, beheading, hanging, and whipping, in one way or other carefully illustrated by contemporary engravings; and they and the ballads they "adorn" thus become valuable aids to history and to archæology.

By their help we are better able to understand and see the uses of these curious modes of punishment, and the way in which they were inflicted, as we read of them in old writings, than can be done even by a careful examination of the few words that usually accompany the records of crime; and thus, by their means more than by any other, we are enabled to study more

closely, and to arrive at more correct estimates of, the state of society of the times to which they may be assigned.

Of the Pillory one ballad example will be sufficient, and I select (Fig. 57*) that which appears on a black-letter ballad of the year 1685, entitled "Dangerfield's Dance. Giving an Account of several Notorious Crimes by him Committed; viz. He pretended to be a Duke, and feigned Himself to be Monmouth, with several other Pranks; for which he was Sentenced to Stand in the Pillory, to be Whip'd," &c. It is one of the most bitter of the political ballads of the time, and full of valuable allusions. The career of "Captain" Dangerfield, as this victim of the pillory was generally called, from the time of his connection with the "Meal-Tub Plot," in 1679, to that of his ill-starred death (for which Robert Francis was hanged) a few years later, was one of restless political turmoil and plotting, and caused him to become a favourite subject for lampooning. His sentence at the last was, "that he should stand twice in the Pillory; that he should be whipt from Aldgate to Newgate



Figs. 43 and 44.—From Climsell's "The Joviall Broome Man."

on one day, and from Newgate to Tyburn on another; and should pay a fine of five hundred pounds;" and in this ballad it is said he was

"Whipt and Scourg'd along the Streets,
Which seemd Soure Sauce after so many Sweets;"

and

"A Newgate-Bird thou may'st accounted be,
Highly deserving of a Pillory.

* * * * *
And so Duke Dangerfield I bid adieu.
A thousand Lashes I bequeath to you."

The pillory—

"The terror of the cheat and quean,
Whose heads it often held I ween"—

was one of our oldest punishments, dating at all events from Anglo-Saxon times, when it was called Healsfang, or a *catch-neck*, and continued in use until quite these later years. Originally instituted as a public means of degradation for dishonest bakers and others who cheated the poor man of his food, this "wooden cravat," as it has been facetiously called, was intended to bring shame on its victims by setting them up as fit objects for the finger of scorn to point at; but it afterwards degenerated

* Some of the cuts here referred to are unavoidably postponed to the next number.

into a political instrument, made powerful in the hands of factions and intolerant governments, and at last became a punishment for various misdemeanours, ranging from manslaughter down to "hedge-raking," and from vagrancy up to sedition, and was inflicted on both sexes alike. In the days to which

this ballad belongs free-speaking men, free-thinking politicians, free-writing authors, and free-acting publishers were doomed to bear its infliction. These, in many cases, found it to be but the stepping-stone from perhaps obscurity to heroism, and through it were looked upon as saints and martyrs by their political



Fig. 45.—A Knightly Audience.

adherents. To some poor starving authors and obscure publishers whose forte lay in the concocting and issuing of slanders, or of free-thought pamphlets and lampoons, the pillory was a real blessing; they were condemned to it poor and unknown, they stood in it an hour or two, and at the end of the appointed time stepped out of it national martyrs, whom hundreds de-

lighted to succour, honour, and almost worship. But not so with all. Some with sensitive minds died from very shame and mortification at having had this punishment inflicted on them; others died, or were lamed for life, through the brutal ill-usage they received from the mob, and thus the pillory, as well as the gallows or the axe, had its victims.



Fig. 46.—King Edward VI.

Whipping "at the cart's tail," a very common mode of punishment, is well illustrated in Fig. 58, from the same ballad, and may be taken as a fair representation of the whippings that, until our own times, took place on market days in many a provincial town. The whipping-post was also as much used, and is frequently alluded to in ballads. Often, in towns and



Fig. 47.—From Martin Parker's "New Medley."

villages, the stocks, the whipping-post, and the pillory formed one "piece of machinery," tier above tier, and must have had a very strange appearance when all in use, as possibly they occasionally might be, at the same time.

Of the Hurdle, the wretched affair on which culprits were dragged to the place of execution or other punishment, a re-

markably good and effective illustration occurs on Fig. 64, which is copied from a rare black-letter broadsheet ballad of 1678, entitled "The Plotter's Ballad: being Jack Ketch's Incomparable Receipt for the Cure of Trayterous Recusants: Or

Wholesome Physick for a Popish Contagion." It will be sufficiently understood by quoting from the head of the ballad itself. "The Explanation of the Cutt—*Coleman* drawn on a Sledge to the place of Execution, with the Pope's Pardon in his hand, speak-



Fig. 48.—From Martin Parker's "Fayre Warning."

ing these words out of his mouth, *I am Sick of a Trayterous Disease.* And Jack Ketch, with Hatchet in one Hand, and a Rope in the other hand, saying, *Here's your Cure, Sir.*"

"It's in vain to spend many words,
We must rouz't by a Sledge and a Rope,"

or a "hempen cravat," as in another line it is called.

Of the Stocks some excellent illustrations occur in ballad cuts. Among others is the characteristic engraving copied on Fig. 59 from a black-letter broadsheet: it represents a wandering ballad singer fastened in the stocks by one leg, but who still continues her vocation of fiddling and singing while held in "durance vile," and receives refreshment from a boy.

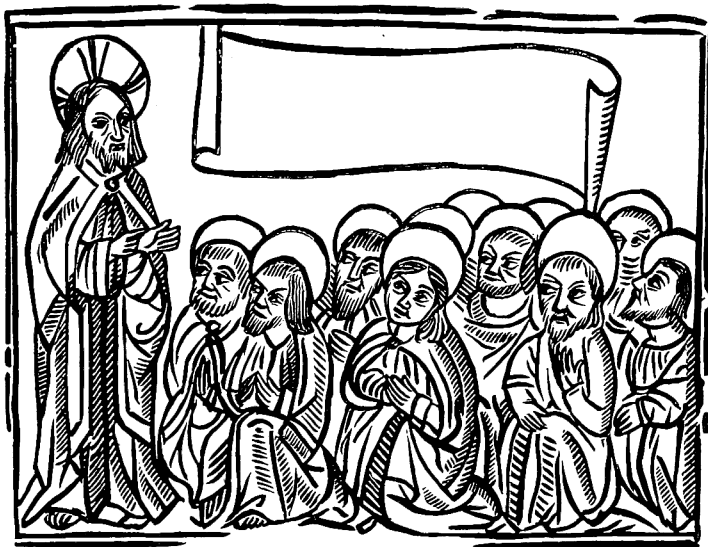


Fig. 49.—From "Friendly Counsaile."

Illustrations of Hanging are far from uncommon among ballad cuts, and both of the main constructions of the old-fashioned gallows are shown. On a black-letter copy of the grand old ballad of the "Children in the Wood," entitled "The Norfolke



Fig. 50.—From "Death's loud Allarum."

Gentleman, his last Will and Testament: and how Hee committed the keeping of his children to his owne brother, who dealt most wickedly with them: and how God plagued him for it," the background of the cut of the combat between the "two

ruffians" bears a good representation of the gallows. In this instance it is, as was very usual, formed of two upright posts, with a cross beam from one to the other, in manner of a door-frame; and the same construction, with the addition of supports and tie-beams, occurs on a curious cut on the "New Medley" ballad of Martin Parker. Of the other form of construction—the single upright post with one arm, something like a reversed

letter I. (Γ)—many examples occur on ballad cuts. Fig. 60, from "The Wofull Lamentation of William Purcas, who for murtherin his Mother at Thaxted in Essex, was executed at Chelmsford" in the time of Charles I., is a very good example; and others equally good occur on Martin Parker's "Well met, Neighbour," where the refrain of each verse is "Oh, such a rogue would be hangd," and on the ballad of "A cruell Murther

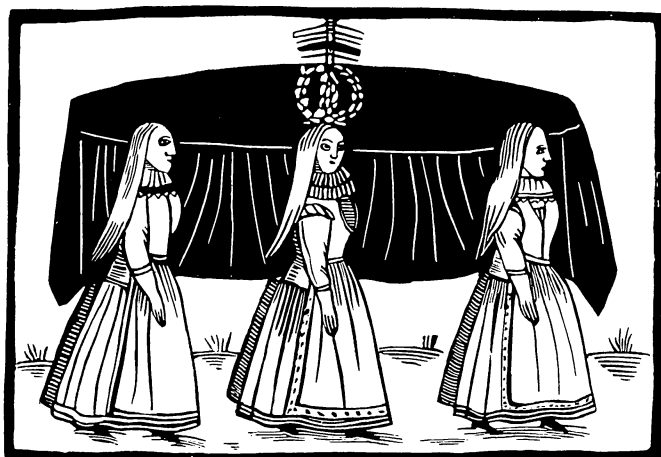


Fig. 51.—Nicholas Blount.

committed lately upon the body of Abraham Gearsy" in 1635, by Robert and Richard Reeve, which

"Robert was prest to death, because that hee
Would not be tride by God and the country.
Richard was hang'd by his own father's dore,
Which did torment and grieve his friends full sore."

The same woodcut (Fig. 60) that appears on the Purcas ballad is also on an earlier black-letter broadsheet ballad, "The godly end and wofull lamentation of one John Stevens, a youth that was hangd, drawn, and quartered, for High-treason at Salisbury in Wiltshire, upon Thursday, being the seventh day of March last, 1632, with the setting up of his quarters on the City Gates"



Figs. 52 and 53.—Funeral Garlands.

of Salisbury; and the whole process is described, from the drawing on the hurdle to the hanging, the quartering, the burning, and the setting up of the quarters on the city gates for "ravenous fowls" to feed upon. The "city gate" of Salisbury, with the quartered victim—a city apprentice boy—and the four ravens, is copied on Fig. 61.

Another, and perhaps more characteristic, cut of a gallows of this form occurs on the ballad recounting a murder and its results at Ware, in the reign of Charles I.; and yet another, equally as useful as an example, on that of "A True Relation of one Susan Higges," a "female highwayman," of Risborough, in Buckinghamshire.